

The Pulpit

A Journal of Contemporary Preaching



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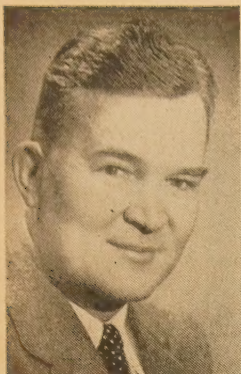
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By Winburn T. Thomas

"The sons of this world are wiser . . . than the sons of light." Luke 16:8.

JESUS observed centuries ago that the children of darkness are wiser than the children of light. This truth was verified at Bandung as delegates from 29 Asian-African lands explored ways and means of working together to create world peace, and to obtain and preserve freedom. We do not know the full story of what happened there. Many of the sessions were conducted behind closed doors. Save for meager communiques issued by the sections, and private handouts by the delegates, the gentlemen of the fourth estate were dependent upon the speeches made by the delegates during the two opening days and in the concluding plenary session. The addresses were effective, thoughtful presentations which probed to the roots of their own feelings and hopes. The leaders of Asia and Africa approached their problems from the angle of their particular interests. Western reporters have called attention to the numerous religious allusions, and to the frequent quotations from the Koran, the Buddhist scriptures, and the Bible. Observed novelist Richard Wright, "The delegates at Bandung believed that they were working under the shadow of the Almighty."

The A-A Conference at Bandung was important because of the economic consequences which will ensue. The delegates agreed upon mutual help and assistance to improve economic conditions. Many of the spokesmen referred unashamedly to the poverty and the underdevelopment of the Asian and African lands. While they unreservedly blamed the lands of the West for the evils of colonialism and racism, the delegates recognized that the economic progress of their lands depends in large measure upon self-help. They admitted that their own people must work and work hard if standards of living are to be

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BANDUNG

raised and the economic health of their nation is to improve.

Bandung spoke freely and critically of colonialism and racism. The Asian-African people feel that colonialism has retarded cultural expression. Fundamental human rights cannot be enjoyed fully in a colonial situation. Racial segregation and discrimination deny the values of civilization and the dignity of man. The colonial system retards the exploited and defiles the exploiter. The Conference echoed ethical and religious principles, in demanding that colonial exploitation and racial discrimination be ended.

Economic and Cultural Problems

In these economic and cultural areas and in the resolutions calling for disarmament and the control of nuclear weapons, the Conference appealed not to established levels of social and national conduct, but to moral ideals which have been inculcated by religion. The fact that there was a common standard appealed to by 29 nations, with their diverse cultures, traditions and religions indicates that goodness, justice and social righteousness have become the accepted norms of the nations, even if they are frequently disregarded. Even the soviet nations, when they appeal to world opinion, do so not in terms of their own communist standards, but in those of the West which have a Hebrew-Christian base.

The Asian-African nations have been accused of self-righteousness in their stress on the sins of the West, rather than examination of their own shortcomings. They did indict imperialist Europe for exploiting Asian and African resources and populations. They also condemned the racial self-righteousness of the white world. More than one speaker, however, emphasized the need for forgiveness, and warned lest the nations of the East fall victim to the same shortcomings they condemned in others. Japan confessed her imperialistic sins and begged forgiveness from those neighbors whose lands and resources she had despoiled.

Bandung was an international association for the advancement of mistreated peoples. Just as the Negroes in the United States, who are divided at many points, find a bond of unity in their common grievances against whites, so did the nations of Asia and Africa at Bandung. "We list those

COMMUNIQUE

tems about which we cannot agree, and then we concentrate upon those which are common ground," explained one delegate in accounting for the unanimity at Bandung. They could agree upon their common sufferings, their fears and their hopes. Had Bandung sought to solve the Kashmir problem, Nehru and Mohammed Ali would have been too distracted to have contributed to the general Conference theme. Had the dispute between Israel and the Arab states been raised seriously, the energy and purpose of the Conference would have short-circuited by emotional outbursts. Bandung found its common ground in the indignities which imperialistic nations have wreaked upon Africa and Asia. While the delegates issued communiques in restrained, objective language, the cold, scientific terminology betrayed their true feelings of resentment and even of hatred. Bandung was a triumph of human restraint.

Triumph of Human Restraint

Bandung also was a triumph for reconciliation. Differences between the delegates occasionally came to the surface. When they did, the chairman usually declared a recess; after passions had cooled, the discussions were resumed. In one of the early closed sessions, tension developed over the issue of neo-colonialism. The chairman called a recess. When the body resumed its deliberations the air had so cleared that one of the delegates wrote the word RECONCILIATION to terminate his notes on the heated discussion. Chou En-lai's refusal to enter into controversy distinguished him from his Russian equal numbers in the United Nations, and added to his prestige. Account for his plaudits on any basis you like, even in the words of Raymond Swing, who said that he was a bad boy who unexpectedly had behaved; but you cannot explain away the fact that Chou En-lai helped create the harmonious mood of the Conference. Chairman of our church board Mr. T. Baja, who was representing the Philippines, observed that the delegates' unlimited patience accounted for the accomplishments at Bandung.

The indignation expressed by the delegates against colonial exploitation and racial discrimination was an inevitable consequence of their long sufferings. We who are worried by the reception accorded Chou En-lai should recognize

that he proved his oneness with the other delegates by identifying himself with them at this point. If we of the West had been more concerned earlier to eliminate the evils on which world communism feeds, we might not need to worry so much today about its spread. Bandung proved again that world communism knows how to exploit the hurts and the sufferings of humanity to its own advantages. By declaring itself opposed to the causes of pain and human misery, as being against human slavery and exploitation, it placed itself on the side of the common people. Thus we who fight communism because of its hypocrisy, its power politics, its totalitarianism, its callous indifference to human values, find ourselves fighting people who want only their freedom and independence.

Shackles of the Past

Bandung wrote large the fact that revolution is going to be a continuing fact in the lives of Asian and African as they break the shackles of the past, both those forged by the West and those clamped on by their own traditions. Persons and powers identified with the *status quo* also will be broken. It is no longer a question as to whether revolution will continue; it is only a question of whose revolution it will be. If we are wise, Christians will see in this discontent the judging hand of God, and will take steps to eliminate the occasions for judgment. The Old Testament prophets reminded the Children of Israel that God used non-believing nations such as Assyria and Egypt as instruments of His wrath and judgment. If we, to whom so much has been given, only belittle or criticize when Asian and African peoples take steps to free themselves, then the judgment of God will fall upon us also. The empires of the West were built upon hard work, good luck and technology—and also upon the broken bodies of slaves, upon economic exploitation, upon racial discrimination. Too often the people who gave lip service to the Christ were the ones who profited most from empire. Bandung said in accents loud enough for all to hear that this injustice must end. We are in the mess we are in today largely because our past includes so much that denies our moral and religious pretensions.

We must demonstrate in the Christian community, if we cannot do it in society at large,

that there is no black or white, no East or West, "for Christ is all and in all." Our churches still must make this aspect of the gospel a fact in their own corporate life. The church has not done, for instance, what the western press did at Bandung. There were approximately a dozen Negro reporters out of the 60 American pressmen there to cover this meeting. There are not more than 200 non-Caucasian missionaries out of the 18,000 American Protestant missionaries working in Africa, Asia and Latin America today. The children of this world are wiser than the children of light.

The Warning of Bandung

Bandung spoke to the churches even as it did to the world at large that the hurt and heartbreaks of two continents are deep. They cannot be healed by the transfer of political sovereignty or by Supreme Court rulings against segregation. Injustice too long continued produces pathological conditions in whole peoples as well as in individuals. These are now being rooted out. There are many kinds of revolution in process: revolutions economic, as land reform in Japan; revolutions social, as Gandhi's efforts to eliminate the outcasts of India; revolutions political, as the switch from Quirino to Magsaysay in the Philippines; revolutions national, as the revolts in Indo-China. Each of these is a protest against some form of injustice. Men and nations of good will must do more than think good thoughts if they are to condition or control these developments—some gradual, some cataclysmic. If we do not side with people who want freedom and the opportunity to improve their conditions, then other nations will do so to exploit human need and suffering, and to enslave its victims. Thus gradually they will limit the areas of freedom until there are no places for men of good will left. Bandung says to you and me that unless we quickly identify with the hurt, the heartbroken and the frustrated peoples of the earth, there shortly will be no place left in the world for this kind of discussion. There are no Bandungs behind iron and bamboo curtains.

Prophetic insight cannot be made relevant to the world situation by appending religious texts to economic, cultural or social analyses. This was the mistake of the statesmen at Bandung. Only as these biblical insights become incarnate in our lives and conduct, and as we become participants in these struggles can we affect the course of history. The delegates from North Vietnam showed us movies of the liberation of Hanoi. We saw thousands of Vietnamese lined up to salute Communist leaders. They were victims of a form of social hysteria no less than were the Germans under Hitler. They are now in a situation in which they can be and many will be called upon to give their all. They no longer have alternatives.

The Communist revolution is not the answer to the world's problems. It is a false Messianism. It leads the people into a worse form of slavery than any they have known in the past. But until there are reasonable alternatives, the doors will continue to close upon peoples who have been lured inside by the Communist promises. Specifics of the ending of colonialism, racism and war must be worked out by our statesmen. But unless you and I as ordinary citizens back them and drive them to this end, they will not undertake the task.

We Christians must take seriously the warning of Bandung. We must make our influence count in pursuing the goals set up by the Conference. There is no certainty that we in this generation will succeed. The children of this generation must again prove themselves wiser than the children of light. But let us do all we can, and leave the rest to God. Let us take our stand on Christ, and for the rest remain uncommitted. Then if we live we live to the glory of God; and if we die, we die to his glory. This is not religious escapism, superstitious fatalism. It is the source of the Christian's dynamic. Let Bandung challenge us to greater commitment to Christ, and let us incarnate the love and faith and courage which he made manifest that we and human history will glorify God, whatever may happen to us as individuals or even to our own homelands or civilization.

The Spark of Courage

THIS is not an age—perhaps there has never been an age—when prophets or great statesmen arise and give a trumpet-lead, and the people hang on their words. Sometimes we long for such leadership. But we shall not get it, and are wrong to indulge in such dreams. For this is the century of the common man, and all statesmen, publicists, broadcasters, parsons, and all people who till the fields, man the factories, hospitals, offices and shops, run the buses and trains and aircraft, bring up families, study and teach—all are equally committed to struggling through and thinking through and praying through, this bottleneck of a 20th century and its fantastic problems; this congested corridor that could lead through into wide space of creative building of new relationships, quiet and joy and peace. No one has major insights; no one is an expert, an authority; the problems are tremendously new, and all are novices, all fumbling. In this agitated anthill which is our home, no greatness, not godlike insight, distinguished or man or woman above the rest; but only the little spark of courage to say and do the rather difficult and different thing, to think new thoughts, to follow small insights, not waiting for big ones. These are the people this century needs.—*Editorial in The Friend, London, March 18, 1955.*

'Forgive Us Our Virtues'

*Let any one who thinks that he stands take heed
lest he fall. I Corinthians 10:12.*

RECALL a story about a certain minister who lived in the Concord-Sudbury region which lies in low, marshy ground outside of Boston. This minister once arrived at a meeting in Boston, after having considerable difficulty getting his carriage through the mud and high water—and found the assembled clergymen praying for rain. He said this to them: "You ministers in Boston start praying for rain the moment a tulip begins to wilt in your front garden, and you don't stop until all Concord and Sudbury are two feet under water!"

In a droll sort of way, this reminds us that a great deal of trouble is caused, not by the worst, but by the best that is in us. We are often weakest at our strongest point, and perhaps the chief problem of life is not how to handle our vices but how to handle our virtues. A good thing, because of its apparent goodness, is not apt to give us any qualms of conscience. We take its goodness for granted, never suspecting how much selfishness and pride there may be in it. And so it slips by our critical scrutiny and unwittingly gives rise to unintended evil. The rain for our tulips in Boston can mean mud and high water in Concord and Sudbury. Vardis Fisher wrote a novel which I haven't read, but its title was suggestive. He called it: *Forgive Us Our Virtues*.

Skepticism and Optimism

If anybody wants to know what the Christian religion is all about, there it is—in that trenchant and challenging phrase. For Christianity is a remarkable blend of skepticism and optimism. On the one hand, it is profoundly skeptical about the goodness of the good man, the wisdom of the wise man, and the piety of the pious man, because all human virtue is infected with the evils of self-centeredness. On the other hand, it is optimistic, because its trust is in God who shares our predicament in love and suffering and whose unlimited forgiveness encourages us to keep on trying in spite of our failures. So this sermon will naturally divide itself into these two parts. To realize how

desperately we need to pray "Forgive us our virtues" is not at first a flattering or comfortable business. But it leads in the end to the peace which passeth understanding and to the joy which the world cannot give or take away.

On the negative side, let me illustrate the problem in three different ways. First, take religion itself. There is nothing finer and nobler in human nature than our capacity for worship and adoration and our willingness to spend and be spent in the service of God. The religious part of life is the creative part. It is the fluid center out of which new patterns of behavior come, and significant changes in the minds and characters of men are brought to pass. But all this good is infected with evil. The life of faith is equally responsible for the glories and disgraces of human history. One recalls the caustic remark which Oscar Wilde once made about the Bible. "When I think," he said, "of all the harm that book has done, I despair of ever writing anything to equal it." We can't shrug that off!

Selfish Pretensions

The intense conviction which inspires the prophet also gives rise to the spirit of bigotry and persecution. A man's loyalty to his church or to his religion is such a good thing that he rarely sees the pride that is in it. But others can. The power of conviction is such a good thing, too, that he rarely sees it being corrupted by the will to power. But others can. If a person does not want to think, he can call it faith and be righteously indignant when questions are raised that require some looking into. If he wants to be saved without undergoing any difficult change of heart and mind, he can find in any religion—even our own—certain doctrines and practices that will do the trick, like magic. If he is liberal and broadminded about religion, as most of us are, this virtue may stem not so much from Christian love as from personal indifference, because on something important like taxes or socialized medicine he may very well exhibit the fanaticism he deplores in preachers and priests. The problem is as endlessly complex as people are different. But under the forms of religion, the sins of pride and selfishness can thrive and do their dirty work almost unchallenged. And the prayer is very much to the point: "Forgive us our virtues, particularly our religious virtues."

This is also true about morality. Suppose you have to make a decision. You mull it over for a while, and the conclusion you finally reach is the

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right and proper thing for you to do. So you go ahead and do it, for a number of good reasons and with the best intentions. I make my decisions in that way, too. So does everybody else. But sooner or later, on one issue after another, these rational and moral judgments collide head-on. What I think is right and proper conflicts with what you think is right and proper—and my good becomes your evil. Why? Not because I am a hypocrite. But because I am a human being. And being human I judge the goodness of things unconsciously in the light of my own particular interests, needs and experiences of life. Therefore the good I would do is only partially good. It is biased in favor of me. By the same token, the good you would do is biased in favor of you. And this fact will continue to bedevil the human family until men become angels. If the issue is a minor one, it is possible to work out a tolerable adjustment on a live-and-let-live basis. On more serious matters, we can resort to the courts—but even then justice gets done, as we say, only if we win the case. When a strike breaks out or war is declared, both sides appeal to reason and conscience and proceed to cut each other down in utter sincerity for the sake of principle. Who was it who said, “When we speak of honor, let us ask ourselves what crime we contemplate”? That is much too cynical, of course. But it will serve to remind us that our moral judgments are seriously flawed by self-interest, no matter how right and proper they may seem to be. The good we do is certainly worth doing and believing in. But it isn’t good enough to justify our virtuous pretensions or to furnish a basis for unity and peace.

Progress Brings New Problems

At this point I am reminded of a printed card which was passed around among friends when any one of them was full of woes and complaints. The message on the card was a simple question. It read: “Why be so DIFFICULT when, with just a little more effort, you can be IMPOSSIBLE?” At the risk of being impossible, let me touch on one more case: man’s organizing genius, his scientific powers, his technical skill. Here is a virtue which has conferred on us so many benefits that only a cad would fail to rejoice and be thankful. But these benefits which we enjoy and want more of, have their liabilities.

As a dramatic instance of this, remember what happened when the U.S. Army occupied Japan and the doctors and sanitary engineers went to work. Within a single year the death rate among the Japanese shot down precipitously and stayed down. That was certainly a good thing—a fine humanitarian achievement. Thousands of lives were being saved from premature and needless death. But meanwhile nothing was done to control the birth rate. And as the overcrowding gets worse, the struggle for existence becomes more acute, and Communist missionaries find a warmer welcome. That is the irony of things.

When modern nationalism came into the picture, it organized competing states into a larger

social whole where commerce and culture could flourish. But only a highly organized nation-state can menace the peace of the world. When the pioneer family could maintain itself by its own labor and skill, the modern urban family must be able to buy what it needs to live on; and a wage economy tends toward collectivism as naturally as the automobile results in more policemen. Even our conquest of nature is not so clear a victory as we like to think it is—for DDT and penicillin are breeding hardier parasites, and nuclear fission in the hands of angry, greedy, ambitious men may prove calamitous. In short, progress has intensified but not solved the problem of evil.

Function of Religion

So there’s a whole lot more to the phrase than a literary paradox: “Forgive us our virtues.” That is Christian realism. It is everlastingly the credit of religion that it sees the human problem not as a problem of weakness but as a problem of power. The temptations of Jesus, for instance, were the temptations of a strong ambitious man, aflame with a great purpose. And doubtless the memory of that early experience rings out in his later warning: “What shall profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

If you will leaf through the Gospels with this in mind, you will notice two things. The first is that Jesus leveled his strongest attack at people whose respectability had made them scornful, whose religion had made them proud and unteachable, whose patriotism had made them exclusive, and whose wealth and power had made them irresponsible. And the second thing you will notice is that for Jesus the function of religion is not to reinforce the simple moral decencies of life. We can achieve that on our own. The function of religion is to redeem our purposes and motives and to help us make the best use possible of whatever personal force we have. In other words, the stress falls not on our weakness but on our strength. The things we’re ashamed of and keep out of sight aren’t dangerous—because we know they are wrong. The really dangerous things in your life and mine are the things we are proud of and feel good about—for, then, our guard is down. “Let any one who thinks he stands,” says Paul bluntly, “take heed lest he fall.”

The Christian Answer

With that note of humility, the positive Christian answer begins. It begins with humility, because we stop kidding ourselves, and give up our illusions of virtue, and are ready and willing to seek God’s help. Our amazing technical genius creates as many problems as it solves, and even develops along with the good. When we rely on reason and conscience, as indeed we must, to help us do good, the thing that we do is never wholly good: it is flawed by self-interest or self-love. And even the highest religious virtues of devotion and zeal can serve as outlets for our

side and will to power. That is why we get down on our knees and confess that we are miserable sinners, who have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts, and there is no health in us. Only the form of the prayer is archaic. Its meaning applies to us at every moment of our lives.

The prayer of Confession is not a matter of cajoling an offended deity. It is not like "buttering the boss," not like "apple polishing." It is rather a realistic way of reminding ourselves in the sight of God just who we are: such complicated, mixed-up creatures that we are weakest at our strongest point and are never so prone to do evil as when the conscience is clear. So we confess our inadequacy. We give up the hopeless attempt to carry a burden which we aren't able to carry alone, and we humbly and gratefully share it with God. We become more teachable. We learn to spot the things which are spiritually off-center and to make the necessary adjustments before they get completely out of hand. Our idea of the real meaning of sin is sharpened and clarified as we gradually acquire a stronger sense of the beauty of holiness.

We have more than one good reason for belonging to and supporting this church. But it is not really a church, in the deeply Christian sense of the word, if we do not meet here in the hope that God's delivering grace will slowly penetrate to the hidden source of all human troubles and frustrations and capture the last bastion of self-centeredness and pride—in my heart and yours!

Humility and Charity

The Christian answer begins with humility—and ends with charity. For humility is the basis of charity. Let me put it this way. Back in college I remember how we used to pray that our examination papers would be read by the professor and not by his young assistant. Why? Because the young assistant had just gotten his Ph.D., was bursting with wisdom and knowledge, and took himself quite seriously. The professor, however, was a good deal older and mellowed, a more experienced scholar who had learned the limitations of scholarship, and was therefore more inclined to stretch a point or two. It is easy enough to criticize a picture if we have never tried to paint one. It is easy enough to accuse the opposition of being biased if we have never seen the bias that distorts our own convictions. It is easy enough to condemn another person's moral failure if we have never tried for purity ourselves and learned how hard a job it really is. When Napoleon, with his companions, was climbing the steep defile of St. Helena, they met a peasant coming down with a bundle of faggots on his head. The aide-de-camp signaled the peasant to step aside. But Napoleon, who as a boy had carried faggots down the mountainside, rebuked his officer, exclaiming: "Respect the burden! Respect the burden!"

When we learn to tell the plain unvarnished truth about ourselves in the sight of God, that

will do much to temper self-righteousness and to make us more charitable. When we realize how much we need the forgiveness of God ourselves, we are more likely to extend forgiveness to others. If we will put less confidence in the kind of peace we can understand because it is built out of fear and self-indulgence, we will come closer to the peace which passes understanding. If we will sit more loosely to and be less greedy for the joys that are contrived by human hands, we will be more ready for the joy which the world cannot give or take away. Humility is the basis of charity—and charity has power in this sick world to heal and reconcile, because it works with patience and compassion.

Those of you who read Franz Werfel's novel *The Song of Bernadette* will recall that scene where the teacher speaks to the strange young girl of her ability to enchant people, instantly winning over even the most stubborn individuals. Bernadette incredulously insists that she does nothing, and the teacher replies, "That's just it, exactly that—you do nothing at all."

A Communion Prayer

By Walter A. Scholten

Arlington Reformed, Poughkeepsie, New York

FATHER of Light, in whom there is no shadow, Giver of every good and perfect gift, to Thee cherubim and seraphim continually cry Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of the majesty of Thy glory. The glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets and the noble army of martyrs praise Thee. We would be worthy of the glorious company, worthy of the goodly fellowship, worthy of the noble army. Lift our hearts above the clamor and chaos of our time, above the darkness of our day, into the white light of Thy presence.

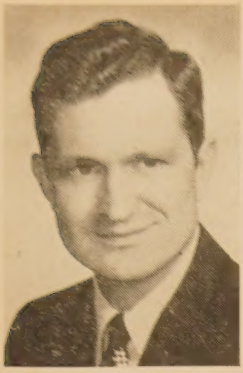
We sing with angels and archangels, and all the hosts of heaven, the deathless song of redemption: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing." In him whom we commemorate Thou hast indeed become Immanuel, God with us, yesterday, today and forever.

Bring forth before our wondering eyes Thy treasures both new and old: forgiveness for the contrite heart, joy for the stricken spirit and the peace that passeth all understanding for the longing soul. Bury forever in the tomb of Thy forgetfulness our restlessness, our fretfulness, our pettiness and our waywardness, and enable us to view beyond the altar of sacrifice the mount of jubilation. Often have we walked with Christ in Olivet, often have we been his guests in the upper room, often have we stood beneath his cross. Sanctify our thanksgiving as we remember his victory, and behold the King in his beauty, the Resurrection and the Life. Amen.

Firecracker Faith

By Robert Paul Sessions

*A multitude followed him, because they saw
the signs which he did on those who
were diseased. John 6:2.*



OUR Lord often used commonplace things of his own day to bring out eternal truths. An ordinary water well spoke to him of "living water," "welling up to eternal life." In a tiny grain of mustard seed he found a promise of the future growth of his Kingdom. In a grape vineyard, with its vines and branches, he saw a parable of himself as the "true vine," his Father as the vine-dresser, and his disciples as branches whose chief purpose is to bear fruit. To fishermen mending their nets, he gave an invitation, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Had Jesus come to our generation, what in our culture would he have used to make real for us his teachings? We can only guess. Yet we are confident that his keen spiritual insight would have found memorable meaning in objects and events to which we give little thought. I think, for instance, that he might have made significant use of the noisy manner in which we celebrate what is supposed to be Independence Day, but what for most of us is only the Fourth of July. In my imagination I can almost see him smiling gently at our firecracker fun and hear him speaking with discernment of our "firecracker faith."

Festival of Noise

Where are the fireworks which a short week ago transformed our peaceful residential areas into pandemonious racket arenas? More significantly, where are the people who shot the firecrackers? What has happened to them? What of lasting value have we to show for our annual festival of noise?

We assume that we know what a firecracker is. The dictionary says it is "a paper cylinder, containing an explosive and a fuse, and discharged to make a noise." More pointedly, a firecracker is a small imitation of a stick of dynamite. Their principle and construction are much the same. The chief difference, except for size, is that a firecracker has only enough explosive power to make

a noise, not enough for any practical value. If you want to move a mountain or prepare to build a highway, you do not use firecrackers.

Do you see what we mean by "firecracker faith"? All too often our religion is but a small imitation of the dynamic faith which was in Jesus Christ. We have just enough of God's power in us to make a show, "to make a noise"—not enough for any practical or permanent value. Jesus described such a faith in telling outwardly religious people of his day, "You are like white washed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful but within they are full of dead men's bones." The writer of II Timothy saw persons in his generation "holding the form of religion but denying the power of it."

Mountains to be Moved

Never has our world more desperately needed real power in the faith of Christian people. If like John the Baptist we are to prepare a highway for our Lord, there are mountains to be moved—mountains of prejudice, of ignorance, of jealousy, of selfishness, of suffering. Such mountains will not be moved by firecracker faith.

Why is our faith so weak? How can it be made strong? Here again our parable of the firecrackers has value. Our faith has no more power than a firecracker because we use our faith for no higher purpose than that which motivates people who shoot firecrackers. In some lands, firecrackers are used at funerals and on special days as a form of magic to frighten away evil spirits, and there are many in our civilized land who see in religion little more than a kind of magic to frighten away various evils from their lives. But aside from this, there are two major psychological reasons why we Americans use fireworks, and which give us insight into our use of religion.

In the first place, we shoot firecrackers because we want a thrill. We live all year long in the same house, working at the same job, seeing the same people, reading the same newspaper, watching the same TV programs, humdrumming our way through one same day after another. Then the Fourth of July comes; we light a skyrocket or a firecracker, and BANG!—something happens outside us to bring excitement into our unexciting lives. In the thrill of the moment we escape our boredom and problems. We literally "get a bang out of life." Notice that we do not want to get

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close enough to the source of the excitement for our persons to be changed in any way. We want only to watch, and listen, and be thrilled.

A second motivation for shooting fireworks is our desire for an outward release for built-up emotions and energies. Little Johnny is in elementary school, and virtually all his decisions are made for him by his parents and teachers. They tell him what to eat, what to wear, where to play, when to go to bed. He is "pressured" by his adults into living as he does, just as most of us are "pressured" by our society—our boss, our family, our income—into living as we do. Then the Fourth of July arrives; little Johnny lights a firecracker, and BANG!—he has found an outlet for his pent-up emotions and feelings. He benefits from this release, but is essentially the same boy and goes back little changed to living the same life.

Faith Without Power

Can you see how we use our religion for these same purposes? We long for a thrill in worship! We want to sit in our pews and escape our boredom or troubles by seeing something exciting happen outside us, apart from us. We seek a release for religious feelings and energies. But we have no desire to change or be changed. True religion should have its thrills, and we do need outlets for expression of religious emotions, but a faith has no real power which does no more than this.

Firecracker faith—a thrill, an escape, a release! Something exciting which happens outside us, which we can watch with little thought of personal transformation. Most of the people who followed Jesus did so because they wanted to see him do something—to somebody else. "A multitude followed him . . ." Why? That he might rid their lives of hatreds, prejudices, jealousies, selfishness? That he might lead them into a life of loving service to others? No! They followed him, the Scriptures tell us, "because they saw the signs which he did on those who were diseased." Few had any thoughts of repentance, surrender or spiritual rebirth.

Are we willing to see that much of today's following of Christ has the same shallow motivation? We want to see God change the world, but are not eager for him to change us. We want to be entertained, but not enlisted. We seek a religion that is comforting but not challenging, thrilling but not transforming.

No wonder our faith has no more power than a firecracker. How weak is the religion of one who will not change! Words of Isaiah, reflected by Jesus in describing the throngs which followed him, are applicable to many of those who crowd into our churches today:

"For this people's heart has grown dull,
and their ears are heavy of hearing,
and their eyes they have closed,
lest they should perceive with their eyes,
and hear with their ears,
and understand with their heart,
and turn for me to heal them."

On the other hand, how glorious is the religion

of those who recognize the need for personal change. Call the roll of great Christians whose radiant lives have counted for the Master, and you will find that their dynamic faith sprang from a continuing surrender of self to the transforming power of God. "Follow me," Jesus said to Andrew and Peter, "and I will make you *become* . . ." As they followed him, especially after they had experienced the miracle-working presence of the risen Christ, they became more than "fishers of men." They became men above men—humble, daring, loving, leading, giving, serving, growing. The Apostle Paul reflected their spirit when he wrote,

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Such has been the spirit of victorious Christians through the ages. Stephen, St. Francis, Joan of Arc, John Huss, Martin Luther, William Tyndale, John Wesley, Albert Schweitzer—these and countless others have heard "the upward call" and have answered, each in his own way, with their lives.

Challenging Horizons

"The upward call of God in Christ Jesus" is still heard today by those willing to be led by God's spirit to new frontiers of faith. Each new height of moral character or spiritual insight brings to view challenging horizons of yet-to-be-discovered country. God still gives to those willing to be changed a vibrant, transforming faith. Only a powerful faith like this, which remakes man, will ever remake man's world. Communism will be defeated by a faith which is not an opiate of our senses but an opener of our souls to God's redeeming power. War, poverty and other ills of mankind will be remedied by the kind of man willing to have God rid his life of warlike attitudes and poverty of soul. Love and brotherhood will triumph as through our surrender to a loving God we ourselves become godlike in thought and action. Such faith is also the hope of our individual lives. It is well to be interested in what religion can do *for* us, but our greater need is for what God can do *to* us, *in* us and *through* us.

Now let me ask you about yourself, as you take part in this service from your place there in the pew. When you entered this sanctuary, did you expect to be changed by your worship experience? Have you changed? You came to worship a God of unlimited power, infinite wisdom and inexhaustible love; but God's greatness begins to have vital force in your life only as you respond to his love, follow his wisdom and surrender your being to be remade by his power. Jesus still says to his disciples, "Follow me and I will make you become . . ." God give us a vision of that dynamic faith which will transform the world because it first transforms us!



The Lonely God

By Don A. Bundy

THE writers of the Old Testament expressed in common terms the uncommon truth about God and man. The poets of the past were skilled in bringing the things of heaven down to earth. Divine care for men comes alive in the 23rd Psalm which sings "The Lord is my shepherd." And in the Genesis stories of creation, poetry makes real and understandable the message of a God-centered religion which gives to man his value and his purpose. In the humble figure of a creator working with clay we find God making man in his own image.

This is a basic concept of our religion, one that has caused endless speculation and is responsible for whole libraries of books exploring its significance. There is hostility to these Bible stories. Some have called them primitive and superstitious and tried to remove them from relevancy by substituting scientific theories accounting for the formation of the world. Enlightened religion accepts and welcomes all that science has to say about the universe. We need the new discoveries of telescope and microscope. Our faith should not be shaken, but buttressed, by such information.

A Message for Today

Yet it must be remembered that the creation stories are far more than an old-fashioned science. Up-to-date science supplements them, but it is no substitute for them because these primitive proclamations tell a bigger truth than any science can grasp. They tell of God and man in religious terms, and while their details may be dated, their total message is as up-to-date as ever. In fact, their spiritual insights are more needed than ever because recent discoveries in the physical sciences demand a society powerful enough spiritually to command and use them wisely.

To help us understand some of the meaning of this big creation idea, we turn to another simple poem, this one a sermon by a Negro preacher. It is familiar to many of you—"The Creation" by James Weldon Johnson, in his collection called *God's Trombones*. Hear these few lines about the

lonely God who made the world and everything it, including you:

And God stepped out on space,
And he looked around and said:
I'm lonely—
I'll make me a world.

Then follows the retelling of the wondrous Genesis story of physical creation. At last God looks around on all he had made and said, "I'm lonely still." The poet then pictures God as sitting down to think. Finally he decided, "I'll make me a man

Up from the bed of the river
God scooped the clay;
And by the bank of the river
He kneeled him down;
And there the great God Almighty
Who lit the sun and fixed it in the sky,
Who flung the stars to the most far corner of the
night,
Who rounded the earth in the middle of his hand;
This great God,
Like a mammy bending over her baby,
Kneeled down in the dust
Toiling over a lump of clay
Till he shaped it in his own image;
Then into it he blew the breath of life,
And man became a living soul.*

Here is one possible answer to why God made the world and people. He was lonely and said "I'll make me a world." Then he had the world with all its beauty, its trees and lakes and all the rest. But when he looked on all he had made, he said: "I'm lonely still."

The Key Phrase

Then to fill his loneliness he made a man, gave it the breath of life and it became a living soul. In both the ancient and the modern settings of the creation of man, one key phrase is "in his own image." Does this mean we *look* like God? I think not, but more important, I think it means we *are* like God: we have some of his characteristics, we bear marks of his personality. We are not like other items he created; he has stamped us with his special sign. We are sensitive beings as he is sensitive. We are alive as no other living thing is alive. We can think and choose, as God can think and choose. We can communicate with him.

How well such a description of man fits into the

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*James Weldon Johnson, *God's Trombones* (New York: Viking Press, 1927). Used by permission.

loneliness theory. "I'll make me a man!" To fill the void of loneliness a *person* was needed—not another animal, but a living soul, someone for a friend, a companion, someone to talk to, a man. The danger here, of course, is that our story approach will humanize God too much. Yet most of our thinking has to be done in human terms. Our own experiences must guide our thoughts about God, and loneliness is an experience common to us all.

Freedom of Choice

Another experience common to us all is our freedom to choose between alternatives—and this we say is one of the marks of God, given to us. This is part of the divine image: that we are free personalities, free to think, free to choose.

Think of yourself a moment from God's point of view. If he wanted a companion, not just a pet or a plaything, he had to create something out of the ordinary, something that truly had freedom. He had in all the animals pets in abundance, and in the sun and moon and stars all the playthings a God could want. But in order to have a friend you have to have a person who is free not to be your friend.

Maybe this is hard to grasp the first time through, but it is vital. God could have no companion to fill his loneliness with a responsive friendship, unless that person were able to reject God's affection, and yet, though able to reject, could choose instead to accept. If God's man were not free to rebel against his Creator, God would have had just another animal, a talking animal perhaps, but one whose words were predetermined and whose actions were only the direct result of God's design. A dog's tricks are but his master's will.

In creation then, we find God taking the great risk, that of making a being so distinctive, so free, that he could, if he desired, deny even the existence of the God who made him. But if this man, possessing this amazing freedom, decided to use it to be a friend, then the loneliness of God would be ended, and God would have a companion whose affection and loyalty were as real as his own.

One of the catechisms asks: What is the chief end of man? Answer: To glorify God. Surely this choosing freely to become God's friend does glorify him and his creation. When a person by his friendship and devotion glorifies God, man is also glorified, and God's faith in his creation is vindicated, and his loneliness is transformed into a glad companionship. Is this not at least part of what Jesus meant when he told us there is joy in heaven over a sinner who repents, rejoicing in the father's house when the prodigal son returns?

Infinite Capacity for Friendship

We are designed for companionship with God, and when we are true to the design, through an act of our own choosing, we are at last at home in God's universe.

How much simpler it would have been had God chosen to make only one friend. But he did not so

choose. He gave to mankind the ability to be many, to populate his earth, to choose over and over again in every generation what to do with freedom. And so we have a God whose creation continues, whose love keeps reaching out to every living soul, seeking each to become his friend because each wants to be his friend.

This means, of course, that God must have not only an infinite, unlimited capacity for friendship, but that he has a "loneliness possibility" for every person who lives.

To simplify this point we must think again of ourselves. We can have a dozen friends and lose one. We still have eleven left, but there is an aching loneliness for that single one who is lost. We can get another friend, or a dozen more, but there's an emptiness where the lost one belongs.

So with God. He is lonely for every person who has not joined his circle. This is the truth of the parable of the ninety-nine sheep, all safe, and the one who is lost. The good shepherd misses the lost one, seeks it till he finds it. God wants and needs for his completeness every person. No one is unimportant to him.

The Human Point of View

Now try to look at all this from man's viewpoint. See how human life parallels what the Negro preacher tried to say about God.

We are victims of loneliness too. How many people follow the pattern of the God in Johnson's poem! By work and brains they amass many things. They are driven by a certain loneliness, a missing something in life. They think it must be money they lack and they devote all time and talent to getting money. Or they seek power to fill the void, and grab all the power they can get. Often they find themselves as God in the poem did—surveying all their wealth and power, all the things they have created—and still aching within. The wealth and power may even be good, but they are never enough for the human heart. They do not and cannot overcome the loneliness inside us, put there by the lonely God who made us in his own image.

We, too, need companionship. We need friends. For our own fulfillment we must have someone to talk to, someone like ourselves to whom we can give devotion and from whom we can receive devotion. Herein lies another great concept of our religion—the brotherhood of man. We must be friends with each other or we will suffer the agony of loneliness. We cannot be persons all by ourselves. Isolation destroys personality. It kills the soul and leaves only an animal. To be a human being, we must be a social being. We must have friends.

But remember now, from the man's viewpoint, what we said of God's viewpoint. No friend is real if his friendship is forced. You get no love if you demand love. It can only be given, freely, by someone who has the ability to refuse to give it. Even as God himself cannot force us to love him, we cannot force another person to love us. Ignorance of this fact of life can make marriage a mockery

and any friendship a farce. All you are able to do is to give love—give it and hope. You are able to receive it, only if it is given in return.

When two real friends meet in life, each is able, out of his freedom, to cure some of the loneliness in the other. In marriage this truth finds expression when the mental, spiritual and physical love of each of two persons matches almost precisely the particular loneliness of the other. Such a fine adjustment and balance is never easy. That is why marriage is an art, not a mere legal ceremony—an art requiring constant practice and performance.

Two-Fold Need

Even with a host of friends—even with a life's companion in marriage—there is still a loneliness that no person can fill. This is another loneliness built in by the Creator—a longing for divine companionship, for a friendship with the source of life itself. We can hide this loneliness longer than most other kinds—or think we can. We get very busy trying to cover up. We try to make life a big party and hope the laughter and gaiety will cloud the ache in our heart. We try in numerous ways

to drug the pain away—and sometimes succeed for a while, perhaps even years. But sometimes life everyone has the moment when to himself admits the truth—that something is missing. may take a tragedy to shake the honesty loose. it may take a new view of the cross of Jesus Christ but one time or another we all face the loneliness for God that is present in the human heart.

Even in such moments, God does not coerce. does not wish a friend who does not freely desire friendship. Many people “recover,” as they might put it, and go back to their isolation from God, back to their regular routine which is almost satisfying, but not quite, because the loneliness for God still hurts.

Our hope then, for ourselves and for all people, our prayer for humanity, ought to be two-fold: for human friendship and for divine friendship.

This is the story of the lonely God—and the parallel story of the lonely man. Only you can banish the loneliness of God for your friendship. Only you and other people can banish your loneliness for human friendship. And only God can banish your loneliness for him.

Pastoral Prayer at Bandung

Offered at Protestant service held at the request of
the Afro-Asian Conference's religious committee

By Komarlin Tjakraatmadja

Stated Clerk, Synod of the West Java Church, Bandung

O LORD, we humbly acknowledge and confess that we have not loved Thee and our neighbor as ourselves. Because we have not compassion, nations are estranged and Thy church is divided. We distrust and accuse our fellows. We condemn and destroy each other out of false pride, intolerance and hatred. Forgive us, we pray.

Father, we confess our indifference to the cross of Christ. We have not witnessed to God's love in our daily life. We do not try hard enough to serve Thee. Forgive us our weakness. Because of our indolence Thy light does not shine in human hearts. Political and racial tensions, wounded feelings and fear abound. Forgive us.

Father, we thank Thee that Thou hast brought the African and Asian nations together, to try to understand each other and to seek world peace. Thy love and Thy promises have united these nations in a brotherhood of common purposes. Thy Son has revealed himself to most of these peoples, but they have not accepted him. Thy Kingdom has come, but cultural pride has kept them from obedience. Our hypocrisy cuts us off from Thy peace.

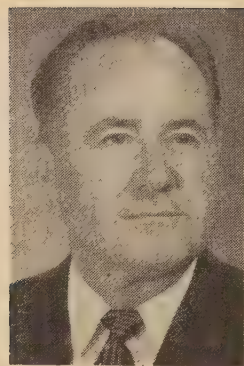
May Thy spirit of good will and tolerance more and more prevail in our hearts. May the diversities of gifts which Thou hast given to African and Asian peoples contribute to the health of all, banishing war and strife and hate. We pray for the increase of mutual sympathy between races.

Imbue the nations in their economic, cultural and political relations with the spirit of cooperation and service.

Grant, O God, that Christian religious and political leaders through loving service and brave witness may take Christ and his abundant life to all. Cheer them in loneliness, protect them against temptations, give them courage. Guide the Indonesian nation. Purify the aspirations of its leaders. May Thy Kingdom come despite our unbelief and disobedience. Bring nearer the day when all nations may live faithfully as children in Thy great world family, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

No Unwanted Children

THERE are no unwanted children in God's family, and even as the hairs of our head are numbered and no sparrow falls to the ground without God's knowledge, so he loves each least person of earth as if he were his only child. “My father and my mother have forsaken me,” the psalmist said, “but the Lord will take me up.” That is an authentic assurance of the Christian faith, and struggling through some dark sea of loneliness and rejection, I know that when my feet have touched that promise, there I stand on rock that is not moved.—Roy M. Pearson, Dean, Andover Newton Theological School.



Freedom's Thoroughfare

By Thomas O. Parish

IN the early days of World War II we anxiously awaited the progress of a race against time in the construction of the Alcan highway. This road, linking the United States with Alaska, traverses vast expanses of Canadian wilderness. It is said to be one of the most expensive roads per mile ever built. The obstacles which hindered its construction were tremendous; some thought them insurmountable. The engineers and builders took the road across uncharted mountains. They bridged raging streams. But they found their greatest obstacle in the tundra bogs, where the roadbed seemed to disintegrate and sink out of sight overnight with the thawing of the subsurface ice. After months and months of countless difficulties the road was completed and opened for military use.

In some such manner of severe discipline and perseverance freedom's thoroughfare has begun, and must be pushed to completion. In her lovely hymn, Katherine Lee Bates envisioned "a thoroughfare of freedom beat" from Plymouth Rock across the Alleghenies, across the wide reaches of midwestern prairies and the Rockies to the blue Pacific. She attributed this road building to freedom-loving folk whose sternness was born of hardship, and whose passion was motivated by desire for economic, political and religious freedom. It may be true that there are no more geographic frontiers in America—no more mountains to be crossed or bridges to be built—but all of us realize that freedom's thoroughfare is yet incomplete. "We are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." Our task, therefore, is in the spiritual realm of ethics, ideals and morals.

Overcoming Obstacles

It is given unto us to complete freedom's thoroughfare across the tundra bogs and swamps of prejudice. Perhaps no evil is so threatening to our national well-being, and to our unanimity as a people, as prejudice. Prejudice is truly ignorance of the other fellow's life—its origin, problems, needs, and its possible contribution and blessing

in the totality of life. Prejudice has been defined as "Being down on what you are not up on." So long as class distinctions divide us and so long as racism denies to minority groups the equal economic and cultural opportunities enjoyed by the majority, just so long will freedom's thoroughfare be delayed by the sinking swamps of prejudice. The communists have seized upon a few instances of flagrant class and racial discrimination in America, and have used these examples of prejudice as their most effective tools in winning the support of the disfranchised peoples of the world and in poisoning their minds against democracy. The ruling of the United States Supreme Court against segregation is a tremendous step forward, but it will not of itself free us from segregation and prejudice. The battle against this insidious evil must be fought and won in the individual American's heart.

Freedom's thoroughfare leads across the mountains of civic and patriotic indifference. The apathy we manifest regarding our precious voting privileges, our general unconcern in the face of grave social or political issues, the indifference we show in our selection of candidates for public offices—these are unmistakable evidences that freedom's thoroughfare will experience severe impediments. Unchecked, these impediments will cause such a sign to be placed on freedom's thoroughfare as I saw on a Colorado mountain road last year: "Impassable."

Hope for All

Apathy and indifference in a populace is the ideal climate for every totalitarianism. A concerned people, alert and aware of the blessings of our heritage, can never be captivated by the sinister forces which would destroy democracy. If ever an election day finds you unconcerned and unwilling to go to the trouble of casting your ballot, talk to Johnny Kuvac, who escaped from behind the Iron Curtain by the 'skin of his teeth,' or visit with any one of a thousand like Johnny Kuvac—doctors, scientists, skilled craftsmen, farmers—men and women who have known the enslavement of dictatorship. They are not indifferent.

Freedom's thoroughfare must bridge the raging rivers of cynicism. Its dry rot has attacked the fiber of Americanism. From every walk of life we hear the expression, "What's the use." Disheart-

THOMAS O. PARISH, the minister of Central Christian Church, Memphis, Tennessee, won an award for this sermon from Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge.

ened by the foibles and inconsistencies of some of our public servants, citizens are increasingly suspicious of those who occupy government offices. Living under the ominous cloud of possible oblivion by the bomb, and remembering the holocaust of recent wars, many are imbued with a feeling of futility. The thoroughfare of freedom *must* bridge the rivers of cynicism. A restored faith in our system of government and its leaders is the need of the hour. The majority of our elected leaders are honest and upright. Many of them are serving far "beyond the line of duty" in these troubled times. A renewed confidence in the basic integrity of the individual American will help us to master the mood of cynicism.

Freedom's thoroughfare is not a one-way street. It can only fulfill its high objectives when it becomes an avenue of mutual helpfulness and communication. Its streams of traffic must flow both ways, for democracy is a give-and-take philosophy of life. It is a highway of hope for both the government and the governed—for government exists by consent of the governed. It is for rich and poor, literate and illiterate, black and white, yellow and red.

Freedom's thoroughfare is not a dead-end street. It leads somewhere. Its ultimate goal is not only to lift the levels of life in America, but discipline and devotion, by precept and example to inspire the hope of all humankind.

Would You Sign the Declaration of Independence Today?

By Clarence Kilde

Congregational, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin

ON a recent Fourth of July an enterprising reporter for a Madison, Wisconsin, newspaper went out on the street with a copy of the Declaration of Independence and interviewed passers-by. He sought signatures of people who would endorse the views set forth in the Declaration of Independence. "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain inalienable rights. . . . That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it . . .

The reporter approached 112 people, of whom only one signed his name to this basic document of our democracy. A hasty glance was enough for people to call these lines from the magna charta of American independence "too radical." Many thought it "communist propaganda." A few accused the reporter of being a communist sympathizer.

Paralyzed by Fear

Here, indeed, is an example of how paralyzed by fear we Americans have become. The fact that the man in the street does not even recognize the opening sentences of the second paragraph of our Declaration of Independence—or if he does recognize the sentences, is afraid to support them with his signature—is evidence of something serious happening to us.

In the first place, we are suffering from what Douglas Steere, Quaker and professor of philosophy at Haverford College, has called "the hardening of the categories." To exercise the two-century-

old American custom of dissent, to speak up freely and firmly for principles and programs of human welfare that may require consequent necessary social changes, packs the peril of our being automatically lumped in the damning category "communist."

In the second place, we shy away from the essential radicalism and revolutionary doctrine of the Declaration of Independence because many Americans have ceased to believe wholeheartedly in its literal and universal truth. Ours is a waning faith in the lofty conviction "that all men are created equal." We habitually think of man in terms of an economic class, a cultural pattern, an age group or economic group. In many instances man is only a statistic.

Changed Attitude

This was not so at the beginning. The men who signed this document of democracy 179 years ago may not have been exactly ecclesiastical, but they verily believed in God, and therefore they had a lofty view of man. They had no mental reservations. They did not say "all men of the Caucasian race," or "all men of Western culture are created equal," but "*all* men are created equal."

Today we are afraid for the future, and from fear we agree that our freedoms must be abridged. It was not so in the beginning. On March 26, 1811, Thomas Jefferson wrote a letter to Benjamin Tyler in which he referred to the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 42 years earlier in these words: "The few of us remaining can vouch I am sure, on behalf of those who have gone before us, that notwithstanding the lowering aspect of the day, no hand trembled on affixing its signature to that copy."

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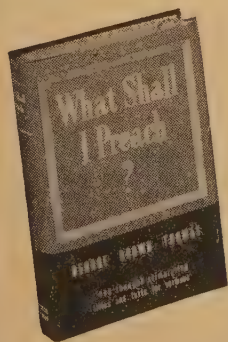
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Pulpit Patter

By Morton S. Enslin

A Forgotten Man

HELPING lame dogs over stiles is not the whole of religion; perhaps in the eyes of many it is not even a central part. The older I grow the more convinced I become that it is a part, and a mighty important part, too. That the author of the Epistle of James seems to have felt that way too has long been one of the reasons which have so endeared him to me. And I cannot refrain from a sense of intense satisfaction that Jesus of Nazareth never seemed too busy to try to give an aiding hand to those—and many there were—in need of simple downright friendship. There are many preachers who, when the secrets of all hearts are fully known, as we used to be told they eventually would be, will be surprised and abashed to discover that they have not been so completely overlooked as at times they are inclined to fear is the case. They have been so busy trying to give a bit of inconspicuous aid to those who sorely needed it that they have not had time to pose for the cameras or reap the rewards of clerical success. For many years I have had the joy of intimate fellowship with one such. In seeing at first hand what it really means for a man to be the last to let go the rope, to spend long and seemingly wasted hours with people just because they need a friend and can't find one—this has made the phrase "a good minister of Jesus Christ" especially lovely to me.

The Two-Talent Man

While musing in this vein, it occurred to me that the New Testament presents several characters, in fact or fiction, whom we have either labeled "undesirable" and then pilloried or, still worse, simply forgotten. Many of them seem to me folks it would have been very interesting to know. Particularly interesting to me is the two-talent man of the famous parable. No one is ever concerned with him. The man who turned his five talents into ten; the third who returned with neither loss nor profit and with an explanation which has laid him open for nearly two thousand years—both loom large. But the man in the middle receives little attention. He did his work. According to the story his industry was no less than that of his more glamorous brother. His praise was the same. Nonetheless, he, like the third stanza of many four-

stanza hymns, goes unnoticed and unsung.

Is it too much to say that in him we see the forgotten man in the center? He does his work, is not infrequently thanked and then as quickly forgotten. Whenever I read this parable I find my mind turning back to the familiar conclusion of Isaiah 40:

But they who wait for the Lord
shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with
wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be
weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

Here, too, the man in the middle is the forgotten man. To some the verse is anticlimactic, starting out in high, putting in first place the man who achieved the brilliant and spectacular, and then trailing away to the ordinary and pedestrian. To others it

Nota Bene

LONGFELLOW could take a worthless sheet of paper and write a poem on it and make it worth thousands of dollars. That is genius. John D. Rockefeller could take a worthless check and write his name on it and make it worth millions. That is wealth. A craftsman can take material worth but a few cents and fashion an article worth a thousand times as much. That is skill. An artist can take a fifty-cent piece of canvas and a dollar's worth of pigment and paint a picture worth a fortune. That is art. God can take an ordinary life, change it and make it a blessing to the entire world. That is the grace of God!—Charles B. Templeton, *Life Looks Up* (New York: Harper, 1955).*

WHEREAS the early Christians heard the call of Christ as the summons of a commander to battle, the popular trend of our day is to invite men to church as a salesman calls to a bargain. We think the church will appeal to people more if

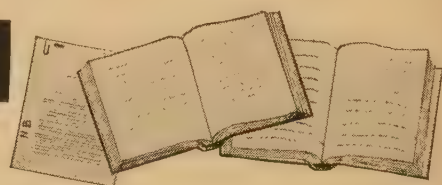
is a true climax, akin to "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In contrast to the showy and spectacular the steady walking without fainting and without applause is the real test of greatness.

But in no appraisal have I ever heard a reference to the man in the center—the man who could run and not be weary. How many of him there are! How much of the world's work they do! In the endless discussion of the cause of the fall of Rome—was her decadence? was it besiegers from the north?—we let pass unseen the real answer: the collapse of the middle class between the grinding wheel of the aristocrats and the slaves.

Will History Repeat?

Nor need we turn to ancient Rome. It would not be difficult to see the same happening here and now. If it succeeds, it spells disaster. The work of the world is in no small measure done not by those who achieve the highest positions and gain the loudest applause nor by those to whom little has been entrusted and from whom mighty little comes, but it is done by this other group—the men in the middle, who, as Koheleth phrased it, by their wisdom delivered their cities with none to remember them.

But let no one say they do not have their reward. They do, and it is a rich one. The satisfaction in running without yielding to weariness brings a joy not to be despised.



we stress what it *offers* rather than what it *requires*. . . . As has been said, the tendency of the modern church is to take out the cross and put in cushions.—Ralph W. Sockman, *The Whole Armor of God* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1955).*

IT has been pointed out by certain wise men that it is not only more blessed to give than to receive, but it is also much easier.—Edward N. West, *Meditations on the Gospel of St. John* (New York: Harper, 1955).*

TO be a Christian means that you take . . . the Christian position: that God is, that God cares for men, that his care for men has included his coming among them in a Man to give them wholeness of life, that his care for men has included the bringing of them to himself in fellowship with their brethren and with the assurance that life does not end with this short term of mortal years. If you are a Christian, this is what you believe

And this is why you have a creed.—W. Norman Pittenger, *Christian Affirmations* (New York: Morehouse-Gordon, 1954).*

It has often been remarked that unless there had been speculation on the dogmas of the Trinity and the incarnation, it is exceedingly unlikely that the philosophers would have come to an awareness of the metaphysical problem of the person.—Jacques Maritain, *Christian Philosophy* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955).*

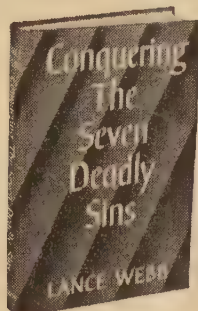
PRAYER is neither black magic nor is it a form of demand note. . . The act of praying is more analogous to clearing away the underbrush which shuts out a view than it is to begging in the street.—*From Our Christian Vocation, by John Heuss* (Greenwich: The Seabury Press, 1955).*

SNOW-CAPPED mountains are majestic in their lofty distance. The whiteness of the snow and the height of the mountain conspire to fill us with awe. They are like a tall man heavy with age and burdened with knowledge. No one wants to take anything from him because of his pride. But unless the snow melts on top of the mountain the humble people in the valley will have no fertility for their farms.—*John Biegeleisen, Glimpses of Truth* (St. Louis: Eden, 1955).*

HOW often have we heard ministers and others tell us so glibly what God wants or what God hopes or what God wishes or what God is saying or what God is doing, till we could cry out in insupportable distress, "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep." There are theologians of the present generation who in their reaction from the instreperid familiarities of popular piety have declared that God is "the wholly Other."—*Nathaniel Micklem, Ultimate Questions* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1955).*

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of its time and energies to its business affairs.—*From Our Christian Vocation, by John Heuss (Greenwich: The Seabury Press, 1955).*

Come Let Us Worship

ERNEST HEMINGWAY is the most positive life force I have ever encountered. I hate anything negative, and I hate waste. In Hemingway, nothing is wasted.—*Marlene Dietrich, "The Most Fascinating Man I Know." Reprinted from This Week Magazine Corporation, Feb. 13, 1955.**

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HOW TO
START
COUNSELING

By William E. Hulme

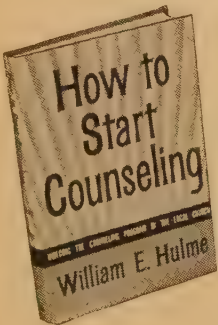
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Marriage

A Responsive Reading for Family Sundays Based
on the Marriage Service from the Book of
Common Order, Church of Scotland

Arranged by Frederic Fox

First Congregational,
Williamstown, Mass.

MINISTER: Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.

PEOPLE: Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

MINISTER: Marriage is a holy estate, created by God and hallowed in our Lord. It is commended in Holy Scripture as honorable in all.

PEOPLE: Marriage is therefore not to be entered upon lightly or inconsiderately, but thoughtfully, reverently and in the fear of God, with due consideration of the ends for which it was ordained.

MINISTER: Marriage was ordained for the life-long companionship, help and comfort which husband and wife ought to have of each other.

PEOPLE: Marriage was ordained for the continuance of the holy ordinance of family life, that children who are the heritage of the Lord should be duly nurtured and trained up in godliness.

MINISTER: Marriage was ordained for the welfare of all human society, which can be strong and happy only where the marriage bond is held in honor.

MEN: The vows we speak are these: “I take thee to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, as long as we both shall live.”

WOMEN: The vows we speak are these: “I take thee to be my wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for

Title and Text

“Independence Day for the Spirit. Gal. 5:1—For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.”

WILLIAM I. NEWMAN.
Bethany Congregational,
Los Angeles, Calif.

Pulpit Calendar

July 1—Dominion Day (Canada).
 July 3—5th Sunday after Pentecost.
 July 4—Independence Day.
 July 10—6th Sunday after Pentecost.
 July 17—7th Sunday after Pentecost.
 July 24—8th Sunday after Pentecost.
 July 31—9th Sunday after Pentecost.
 Aug. 7—10th Sunday after Pentecost.
 Aug. 14—11th Sunday after Pentecost.
 Aug. 21—12th Sunday after Pentecost.
 Aug. 28—13th Sunday after Pentecost.
 Sept. 4—Labor Sunday.
 Sept. 11—Rally Day.
 Sept. 18—16th Sunday after Pentecost.
 Sept. 25—17th Sunday after Pentecost.
 Sept. 25-Oct. 2—Christian Education Week.

(Pulpit Calendar lists dates in the calendar of the Christian year and other observances of national or religious significance.)

richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, as long as we both shall live."

MINISTER: When a man and a woman have covenanted together in holy wedlock, and have declared the same before God and before witnesses, pronounce them to be husband and wife: In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

PEOPLE: Those whom God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

MINISTER: May the Lord pour out the riches of his grace upon us, that we may please him by living together in holy love until our lives' end.

Torch of Freedom

CARL Van Doren in his book *The Great Rehearsal* tells of the immortal words spoken by Benjamin Franklin at the closing session of the Constitutional Convention, as recorded in the notes of James Madison: "Whilst the last members were signing it, Doctor Franklin, looking towards the President's Chair at the back of which a rising sun happened to be painted, observed to a few members near him that painters had found it difficult to distinguish in their art a rising from a setting sun. 'I have,' said he, 'often and often in the course of the Session, and in the vicissitudes of my hopes and fears as to its issue,

looked at that behind the President without being able to tell whether it was rising or setting. But at length I have the happiness to know that it is a rising and not a setting Sun.'"

And so it is with our beloved country today. She is, and must continue to be, to the world a rising sun for freedom—as a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid, as a candle which men light and place in the candlestick that the whole house (in this instance the whole world) may be full of light!—*Edward D. Garris, Tabernacle Methodist, Odd, Va. (Excerpt from a sermon which received a Freedoms Foundation second place award.)*

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For Summer Study

REDISCOVERING PRAYER. By John L. Casteel. Association Press, \$3.50. This latest volume in the "Rediscovering" series of Association Press continues the tradition of excellence already established by the earlier issues. *Rediscovering the Bible*, it will be remembered, is Bernhard W. Anderson's swiftly paced, lucidly scholarly account of the Bible as the narrative record of God in action. Anyone who missed that book missed the best general study available of the results of the latest biblical scholarship and the most recent biblical theology. Preachers can learn much, too, from its pointed application of biblical truth to existing problems. It is still in print, still available, still a "must." *Rediscovering Jesus*, by Jack Finegan, was not as weighty a book, either in size or in scholarly importance. Yet its scholarship is current and impeccable. It fills brilliantly the gap left in most contemporary Christology, the study of the historical Jesus.

Now comes *Rediscovering Prayer*, which moves at once to a spot very near the top of its field, as did the two earlier books. It is a fully articulated theology of prayer, a homiletical *tour de force*, and a devotional classic in itself. With the problem of prayer as his frame, Dr. Casteel has woven together the major theological emphases of our time. Like Buber and Brunner he sees man in encounter with God. Like Rudolf Otto, he is struck with the holiness of God. Like Kierkegaard and Niebuhr he analyzes the anxiety of man, and the wrong directions, taken to resolve that anxiety. Like the classic theology he hymns the forgiveness of God. Like Luther he sees the whole Christian life, including the prayer life, as a grateful response to God's gracious act. Thereafter come meditations on the kinds of prayer and the enrichment of prayer. But all is in solid theological context.

The homiletical achievement is in the style of the book. Its structure, its language, its perfect illustrations—all mark a master preacher working at his best. As for calling this a devotional tract, let that suggest that in this book a man's personal devotion comes through in grace and beauty, to the advantage of our private and public devotion.

THE SACRAMENTAL TABLE. Edited by George Johnstone Jeffrey. Harper, \$2.50. Among American Presbyterians it is claimed that a good Scotch burr is worth an extra \$5000 on any preacher's salary. These 15 short communion meditations are a reminder that it is not just Scotch sound but the whole theological and literary accent of some Scotch preachers which make them

welcome in pulpits everywhere. The Scots have not been great original theologians, by and large, but they have dug deeply into all theology, and with native discrimination have sorted, arranged, organized the truth when they found it so it could be taught and preached. They have applied and illustrated and proclaimed. That peculiar genius is everywhere in evidence in this volume. The meditations and the prayers which precede each, are deeply thought, deeply felt. The style has all the grace and dignity which we associate with the revered authors; it has also the heart and fervor which is the less frequently noted hallmark of Scottish faith and life.

WALKING IN THE LIGHT. By Marjorie Wilkinson. Abingdon, \$1.00. The subtitle of this little book calls it "glimpses into life with an inner radiance," and that is just what it is. From far and near, old and new, Mrs. Wilkinson has drawn the testimony of lives that have been made different and that have made a difference because of the Christian commitment. Some of the difference has been in vocation, some in marriage relations, some in family bonds, some in strength, some in illumination. But everywhere, lives have been altered. Back and forth through the centuries and across the nations the author's quest ranges, and everywhere she finds the evidence and the witness. Every paragraph gives an illustration and suggests a hope. A real thesaurus of hope.

INTERPRETING PAUL'S GOSPEL. By Archibald M. Hunter. 144 pages. Westminster Press, \$2.50. Dr. Hunter's earlier books (*The Message of the New Testament*, *The Work and Word of Jesus*, *A Pattern for Life*, etc.) have commended him to us as thorough, reliable, communicating scholar. He is up on the last word in New Testament research, has even spoken some of them himself. But he is never doctrinaire; he never tries to pound home extreme, hypothetical interpretations. Turning in this book to Paul's message, he offers a balanced statement of what the best biblical scholarship of the day is saying about Paul. Hunter is, as always, independent but not radical. He knows his own mind, but he also knows the relevant literature. From them he shapes a book that brings us a up to date on the apostle. The liberal quotation and illustration from biblical and non-biblical sources make this a homiletical gold mine. As a matter of fact, this scholar has a preacher's style. We'll have to commission a sermon for The Pulpit.

T.A.G.

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THE EDITOR'S PAGE

The Event of the Month

WHAT President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles said on television was hardly more impressive than the "new look" on their faces. Mr. Dulles has rarely smiled since he became Secretary of State. But in reporting to his chief and the nation on recent events in Europe his optimism, though cautiously guarded, could not be concealed. He

The Brightening Outlook

listed three major events which, taken together, offer ground for some relief from the cold war: the signing of the Vienna treaty restoring Austria's independence; the admission of West Germany into NATO; and the prospect of a conference of the heads of the four great powers—U.S.A., Britain, France and Russia—on the world situation. Mr. Dulles warned that too much may be expected from this conference. But ways to peace now unforeseen may be opened up. The recent more cooperative attitude of Moscow is interpreted by some, and not without reason, as cynically strategic in an unending campaign of world revolution. Therefore, it is said that Mr. Eisenhower should not expose himself to the hazards of a top-level conference. But if he calls for universal disarmament, internationally supervised, as I believe he will, he will be in a safe position. His private correspondence with Defense Minister Zhukov reinforces the speculation that the President has certain undisclosed reasons for believing that Bulganin may bring a new spirit into the four power deliberations.

The Book of the Month

A LAYMAN'S GUIDE TO PROTESTANT THEOLOGY. By William Hordern, Macmillan, \$3.50.

ONE way of appraising a book is to measure it in terms of the extent and urgency of the need which it satisfies. Judged by that standard, this is the most important religious book that has appeared in a long time. Our Protestant laity—and, alas, an appalling proportion of our ministers—have little awareness of or feeling for the context of their faith. Faith without its context exists in a vacuum and is easy prey for the brood of rival cults which this emptiness invites. Theology is the contextual pattern which Christian faith weaves around itself. It is faith striving to give an explanation of itself. Faith is the Word of God in the heart; theology is the language which faith must use in communicating itself. The preacher who caters to our uninstructed laity by stigmatizing theology as an enemy of religion would be made ashamed of himself by the reading of this book. It is an exciting book—like a story. Its account of the centuries-long effort of Christian intelligence to communicate the unsearchable riches

that are in Christ—from Paul and Origen and Augustine to Rauschenbusch, Niebuhr and Tilli—ought to be read by a million laymen and even last one of our perhaps 145,000 Protestant ministers. Look at these brilliantly conceived chapter titles: 1) The Growth of Orthodoxy; 2) The Threat to Orthodoxy; 3) Fundamentalism—the Defense of Orthodoxy; 4) Liberalism—the Re-making of Orthodoxy; 5) The Re-making of Liberalism; 6) The Rediscovery of Orthodoxy; 7) Neo-Orthodoxy—Reinhold Niebuhr; 8) The Boundaries Between Liberalism and Neo-Orthodoxy—Paul Tillich; 9) Orthodoxy as a Growing Tradition. These titles guarantee that the author will illuminate his subject and fascinate his readers. Dr. Hordern holds the Th.D. degree from Union Theological Seminary and is professor of religion at Swarthmore College.

A Thought for the Month

BY many Christians public prayer is thought to be less important than private prayer. This is wrong. When people say, as many do, that they can worship as well at home or driving to the country, or hearing a sermon over the radio, they

Public Worship and Private Devotion reveal a serious lack of understanding the nature of what we do in church. When we meet with other members

of the "household of God" and melt our private repentance and aspiration in corporate prayer and song and attention to God's word, we touch depths to which our private devotions do not normally go. To neglect public worship causes private prayer either to become self-centered or to wither away into vague sentimentality. Our secret prayer is always beset by the temptation to assert our own desires as if God had no one to think of but us. Corporate prayer is a check on this temptation. When we pray with others we cannot give full rein to our private desires. The fact that we cannot do so often compels us to challenge their legitimacy. This challenge may be God's answer to our private prayer. In church, rich and poor meet together, the weak and the strong, the learned and the unlearned. This diversity of status gives rise to a diversity of desires which can be reconciled only in the impartiality of God's fatherhood. When we pray together in the corporate fellowship of brotherly love we are often compelled to chasten our private prayers as unchristian. The will of God cannot be fully discovered in solitude, but only in fellowship. What we learn of God's will in corporate worship in church can be carried back to our closet to enrich and discipline the prayer that we offer in secret.

Charles Clayton Krumm

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the long run, the Afro-Asian conference in Bandung may stand as one of the most significant international meetings in its era. This was not a council of the heads of the mightiest nations in the earth, met to resolve this or that particular issue. It was instead a meeting in which the people too often shut out at that other level, got together to get to know each other in their fears and in their aspirations. Agreements were signed, no great promises were endorsed. Leaders spoke frankly and evidently tried to understand each other. The map of the world was not redrawn. The nations of Bandung, for the most part, do not see themselves reshaping the world in the near future. Yet in so far as they are a nightmare past and a bright dawn of the future they may finally be the most important single element in that reshaping. The importance of Bandung is not in what the delegates have proposed, but in the realization that these nations will finally determine the disposal of whatever the allegedly "great" nations propose. Any meeting which is so important to the common life is important to the Christian. When the participants in such a meeting come from nations coming from the underprivileged to the dispossessed, the Christian is even more concerned. Because our compassion for "the last and the lost and the least" is a compassion for peoples as well as for persons. All this being so, we at The Pulpit feel ourselves fortunate in having two documents from Bandung which are symbols of the meeting, appropriate to the magazine, and useful to alert preachers. The first is the sermon which Winburn Thomas preached in Djakarta on May 1; the second is the prayer of Komarlin Tjakraatmadja offered at the Protestant church service on the closing day of the conference.

Quite another locale and set of circumstances accounts for the first sermon in this issue. Months, maybe years ago, one of my colleagues at Lincolnton College handed me a copy of a sermon preached by her brother in neighboring Webster Groves, Mo. Mary Lichliter, gifted daughter of a distinguished father, McIllyar, and a proud sister of distinguished brother, James, passed on the word from Webster Groves. The sermon was sunk in my files a long time—St. Charles is only ten miles from the church Jim served until recently, so I could hardly be "stimulated" to any part of the sermon myself! But I came across it again recently, in an unseasonal file-urru, and wanted it for The Pulpit. The author, queried on the possibility, thought not, but sent a couple of replacements which I copped onto immediately. They outdo the first. One is offered here, and later, when memories fade enough so no one will accuse me of playing favorites, the other will come along. T.A.G.

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